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AUTHOR Golden, James R.: Parker, Joseph P.
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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the Facts of Environmental Life (FEL), a counseling technique which incorporates the action sociogram and the Adlerian concept of purposeful behavior. The use of the FEL materials, i.e., a life space board, standing figures of varying sizes, and blocks and barricades representing emotional blocks, is illustrated. Instructions for the construction and administration of the FEL are provided, including a sample script for introducing the client to the FEL technique. The use of the FEL recording sheet is discussed and interpretations of the sociogram are presented. The appendices contain a description of FEL materials and a sample FEL recording sheet. (NRB)

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# FACTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL LIFE (FEL): A Projective Counseling Technique

Presented By

James R. Golden, Ed.D.
Marywood College

Joseph P. Parker
Marywood College

To

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The Facts of Environmental Life (FEL) Technique incorporates the Psychodramatic tenents of an action sociogram and the Adlerian concept of purposeful behavior. Action sociogram is a strategy in which the client is able to portray any social group, i.e. family, friends, work, etc. As in any group, social distance exists and can be demonstrated via geographical distance, barriers and/or height. The positioning, posture, and/or facial expressions of those involved within the sociogram may actually represent the "real" relationship. With this representation the client is able to perceive his/her relationship within the total social constellation from an objective view (Chase, Farnham, Magee 1970).

The Adlerian position on purposeful behavior upholds that each individual has his/her own personal private logic that is oriented toward some goal. As Ansbacher and Ansbacher (1973) stated:

> "Anyone who wants to understand Individual Psychology correctly must orient himself by its clarification of the unitary purposefulness of thinking, feeling, willing and acting of the unique individual... Since psychological movement without direction and goal is unthinkable and could not be carried out, the behavior of the entire great life movement, as well as each part of a movement, is a striving ... This striving is communicated to every smallest movement impulse, takes place without words and concepts, and occupies the entire individual creative power of a person (p. 52).

From the Adlerian position it is understood that a client's private logic, that which gives direction toward a goal, is expressed in every aspect of his/her personality. The client having this completely unified purposefulness of his/her behavior, would unknowingly represent

his/her private logic through life themes.

The FEL takes the action sociogram's concept of representing social groups with the components of social distance, the Adlerian's purposefulness tenents, and then synthesizes their applications so that it can be brought into the individual counseling sessions. The client uses standing figures (having three distinct sizes), a board representing life space, and blocks and barricades (used to represent emotional and/or relationship blocks).[1]

## PROCEDURE

The counselor introduces the client to the FEL by stating basically the following:

> "This board will represent your life space. This life space can be any part of your life we designate it to be, such as your family or work. Within each area, such as family, there are differing relationships that exist. I would like you to use the pieces you see here (pointing to the figures, blocks and barricades) to represent these various relationships. Let me demonstrate what I mean. (Counselor takes two small pieces and puts them in the middle of the board side by side). Looking at these two figures what kind of relationship do you think they could have? (You try to have the client see that it could be a close relationship, i.e. husband, wife, brother, sister, lovers, very close friends, etc.)
>
> Good, that's right; a close relationship. Let me put this second figure here ... (The counselor moves one of the pieces approximately six inches away)What is the relationship now? (The client should see a more distant relationship, i.e. associates, schoolmates, acquaintances, etc.) Let me add this figure ... (a medium size piece is placed next to the unmoved piece.) What would that represent? (Client indicates someone of higher

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[1]See Appendix A for the description of the physical components of FEL.

esteem, i.e. father-son, teacher-student, older sibling-younger sibling, boss-worker, etc.) Okay, you have identified the relationship between the medium figure and the nearest small figure, but take into account the other one too. (The client would indicate an alliance between the two close ones and the third piece not incorporated in it, i.e. teacher & teacher's pet with another student, boss and favorite worker with another worker, parent and favorite child with another sibling, etc.) If I put this here what would this indicate? (A small barrier is placed between the two small pieces but closer to the isolated one. The client would identify that there is a blockage in their relationships, i.e. the child is rejecting the sibling and parent, the worker hates the boss and his favorite worker, etc. The barrier indicates a strong emotion.) Now let me do this and tell me how you see the relationship. (The counselor puts the large piece on two stacked blocks next to the isolated piece having both behind the barrier. The client may see the relationship of the large figure and small as close but the large figure is better or thinks its better than the small one.) Do you have the idea of what I would like you to do? As you do it please tell me who you are putting in your life space. (The counselor cleans off what he/she put on the board so the client can start without moving extra pieces around.) I would like you to show me your _____ relationship in your life space."

After the client receives the introduction and he/she begins, the counselor has to note on the FEL Recording Sheet[2] the priority/order of persons introduced into the life space. The order may indicate temporal reasoning i.e. youngest to oldest, past to present; or emotional attitudes, i.e., positive to negative feelings.

The stature of the client's size compared to the significant others in his/her relationships may have an importance in finding a theme. The difference(s) may be a result of self-esteem, age, physical variations or culture. A recording of the sizes of each figure employed is indicated on the recording form.

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[2]Found in Appendix B

The distance has to be graphed on the FEL Recording sheet. This can be done by marking the life space board as indicated on the recording sheet to help locate positioning. The males are represented by a "△" and females by "O". The number corresponding to the figure's order of choice is put inside the appropriate sex representation, i.e. ④. The example given indicates the sex (male) and the order of choice (fourth).

The height or stacking of blocks, is recorded with a square drawn around the corresponding figure with the number of blocks indicated in the outside upper right-hand corner, i.e. $\boxed{④}^{2}$. The example represents that the fourth person, a male, had been placed on two blocks. This information gives a measure of equality, superiority or inferiority in the status or private logic of the client.

Barriers are represented by drawing a straight line in the same space on the recording graph as the barrier occupies on the life space board. The barriers are usually representing emotional blocks between the figures it separates. The feelings could be anger, resentment, fear, jealousy, etc. However, sometimes the barriers represent a caste, religion, geographic distance, etc.

Since the technique has many aspects the counselor is advised to take notes in addition to those required on the recording sheet. It even has been suggested that a second administrator be present just to record verbal and nonverbal behaviors of the client (Chase and Farnham, 1966). The presenters have successfully used FEL without a second administrator present substituting a tape recorder for the professional recorder.

Once the client has fully represented the life situation on the board the counselor should look at the total sociogram. Again, ask the client, as the counselor has been doing while the figures were being placed,

about the relationships being represented. The thinking, feeling and actions of the client in regards to the others should be discussed. The distance of the barriers and blocks to a specific figure can be a focal point to identify who is causing/maintaining them, as well as what exactly it is representing.

The counselor and client may find out enough information regarding the client's perception of his/her world with just one administration of the technique. However, it is advised (Chase and Farnham, 1966 and Chase, Farnham, Magee 1970) that several life situations be represented, i.e. early family relations, school/work relations, post school relations and/or present relations. With at least a second representation a theme may emerge showing the client and counselor how the client views and works at maintaining his/her life space. Once the theme has been identified, traditional counseling methods can be incorporated into the sessions.

## SUMMARY

The FEL technique utilizes the displayed interaction of a sociogram and the concept of purposeful behavior. The counselor in one-on-one counseling sessions can employ this procedure to obtain a further clarification and better understanding of the client's concerns. As the client develops and explores his/her issue, as represented on the life space board, a personal understanding/insight may come about. After having several areas of a client's life represented by FEL, the counselor may identify a theme, revealing the private logic, the modus operandi, the self-fulfilling prophecy, out of which the client works. Once these self-defeating misperceptions are brought out, they can be worked on through conventional counseling procedures.

## IMPLICATIONS

As seen above the FEL Technique can be utilized for processing interpersonal constellations including thoughts, feelings and actions within the individual counseling format. This technique can easily be used for marriage, pastoral, family, school and industrial counseling (Chase and Farnham, 1966).

Since the client is projecting his private logic used in life on the life space board, the administrator has an obligation to inform the guardians of minors of the FEL's power. The tester must obtain their written permission before administering it.

Further research is needed to standardize this technique with presently accepted projective testing techniques, i.e. T.A.T. or Early Recollections.

## REFERENCES


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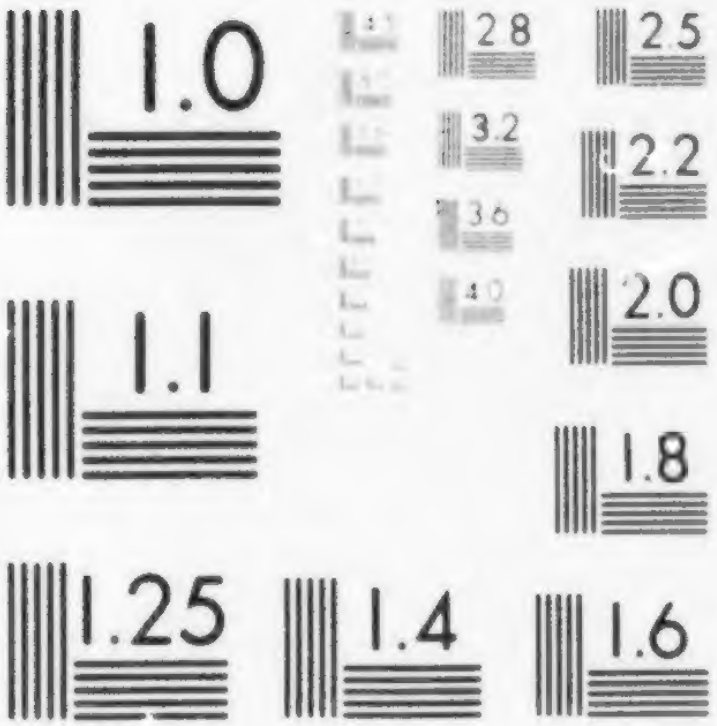
Appendices

# Appendix A
# FEL Materials

# FEL MATERIALS

| | |
|---|---|
| Life Space Board | The board is 16"x16"x1/4" which can be made of hardboard, wood, plastic or any like material. The board is divided into 2" squares which are labeled A-H horizontally and 1-8 vertically. |
| Blocks | The blocks are usually made of the same material as the board. They are 16 in number measuring 2"x2"x1/4". |
| Barriers | The barriers are the same material as the blocks. They number 16 measuring 1"x2"x1/4". |
| Figures | The figures have been of three sizes, large, medium and small. Chess pieces have been used to represent these sizes. (Note Never refer to these figures by their chess name, e.g. bishop since it may influence the client's assignment of persons to that piece.) The small pieces (pawns) are 16 in number, medium pieces (bishops) are 4 in number, and the large piece (queen) is 1 in number. All figures must be of the same color, preferably black. |




MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS-1963-A

Appendix B
FEL Recording Sheet

# FEL RECORDING SHEET

Name _____

Date _____

Length of Administration _____

KEY:

Male △

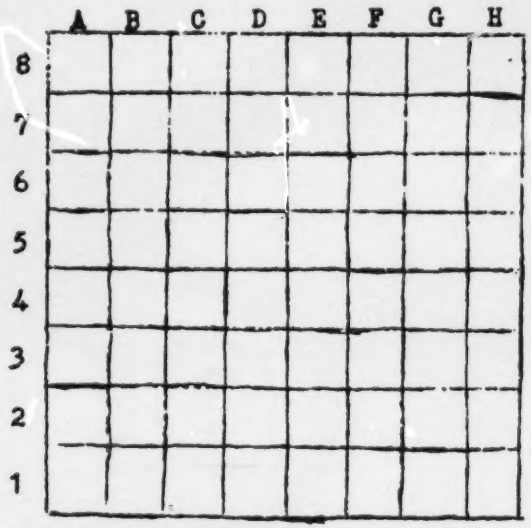
Female ○

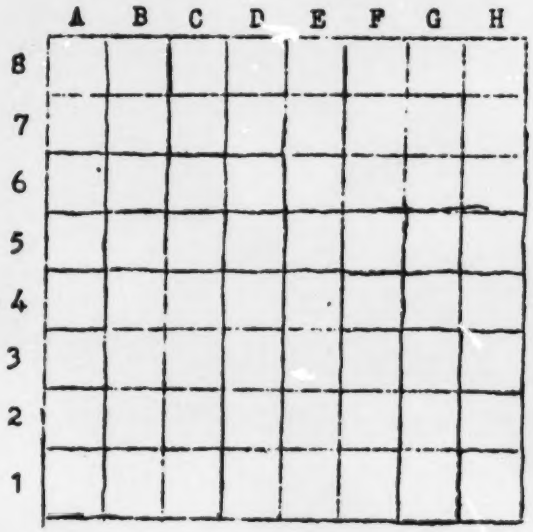
Subject Ⓘ or (I)

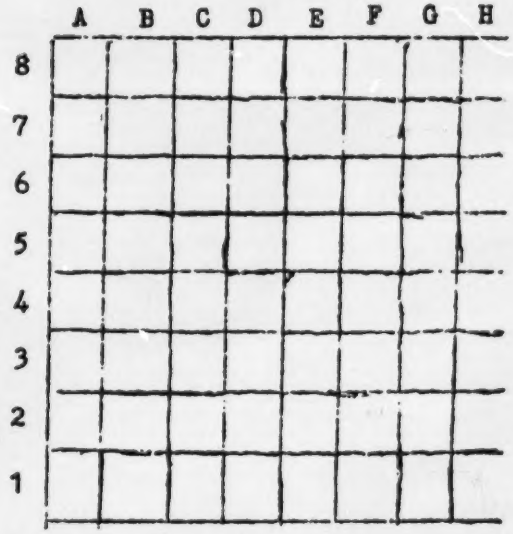
Height Block(s) 5*

*No. of blocks □

Barrier /




| Order of Choice | Representation | Size |
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| 10. | | |
| 11. | | |
| 12. | | |

| Order of Choice | Representation | Size |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | | |
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| Order of Choice | Representation | Size |
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